

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
OF THE GERMAN ASSAULT ON NORWAY IN 1940

by

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ABSTRACT

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The German attack on Norway in 1940 was a swift, ambitious and seemingly risky undertaking. The German Navy's operations were conducted in the teeth of the British Royal Navy. The subsequent amphibious assaults employed very limited forces, spread thinly among several objectives along the long Norwegian seaboard and in the deep Norwegian fjords. Ultimately setting the preconditions for a long-term occupation of Norway, Weserübung was an operational success and secured strategic advantages for Germany.

Dismissing one-dimensional theories on the decisions for and strategic implications of the German attack on Norway, this paper discusses underlying factors in the German decision-making process and the dynamics of the strategic factors that preceded the campaign. The direct strategic effects of the campaign are assessed along with theories on indirect, long-term strategic implications.

The paper suggests that the decision resulted from a process where personalities, individual characters, power-plays, institution building and institutional cultures, parochial interests and coincidence played into both decision-making and the crafting of strategic assessments. While significant direct effects on operations in the Atlantic are attributable to the invasion, the indirect and long-term implications were probably more significant.

Second- and third order implications included conceptual military development, political prestige and the changed perception of German grand strategic might. The invasion also reduced Germany's marginal ability to influence other important theatres of war as resources remained committed to Norway. More intriguingly, the success of Operation Weserübung served to cement Hitler's dictatorship and to reinforce his increasingly autocratic leadership of the German Armed Forces – with significant effect on the conduct of World War II.

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This SRP was initially intended to be about something entirely different. The idea to examine the processes and decisions behind the German attack on Norway was handed to me when the original thesis was aborted due to dire circumstances and my own folly alike.

A paper this magnitude should not be a hard thing to do. But, due to the circumstances alluded to above, it was to me. This paper would simply not have been committed were it not for Steffen. He came up with the initial idea for the topic, nursed the project along and supported me when others would have not. Due to his leadership and loyalty I got a break that I probably did not deserve, but nevertheless needed badly.

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I owe this paper – and much more - to Steffen and to M. They know who they are.

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STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE GERMAN ASSAULT ON NORWAY IN 1940

The German attack on Norway in April 1940 was a stunning operational success. A complicated and daring plan was executed with surprise, speed and excellent coordination and Norwegian defense forces were swiftly and decisively defeated. By seizing Norway, Germany would effectively deny Great Britain control over Norwegian waters, secure ice-free harbors and guarantee a year round flow of the Swedish iron ore vital to Germany's industry and war effort.¹ Additionally, bases in Norway could provide advantageous basing for the German Navy for a subsequent war against Great Britain.² The strategic and operational arguments for invading Norway seem logical and compelling. And, the iron ore transports were indeed secured and the Germans certainly operated from Norwegian bases against Britain during the war. But is this why the campaign came about? Were these effects the only implications of the campaign? Did second and third order effects originate in the experience of the campaign and German decision-making processes with substantial impact in later campaigns?

In addition to a discussion of strategic issues and a review of the developments and assessments that made up the road to war on Norway, this paper offers glimpses into the processes and underlying factors that affected German decision-making. Furthermore, it suggests theories on how the campaign may have had second and third order effects on strategy and the larger war effort. Thus, this paper is more about the processes that shaped the German campaign in Norway and the implications of it than about the campaign itself. The concurrent invasion of Denmark, though an integrated and supporting part of the German campaign, will not be considered here.

A PARADIGM FOR UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Historians have often presented the assessed rationale for the German campaign in Norway as a one-dimensional line of reasoning, building a post hoc logical explanation for the decisions that were made. Similarly, the strategic implications of the assault and subsequent occupation are commonly assessed in terms of the direct effect upon strategic means, ways or ends, and quite commonly in terms of being of greater or lesser importance to the overall conduct of the war.

The intricacies of strategic and operational planning, relating the complex fabric of intelligence, command and control, logistics and tactics involved in continuous parallel planning and execution at a number of levels creates a hardly comprehensible web of asymmetrical factors. Thus, after-the-fact characterization of campaigns as successes or failures does not help to reveal the real reasons for the turn of events, and neither promotes enhanced

comprehension nor provides lessons learned. Superficial analysis leads us along a very dangerous path, as a successful campaign may be an improbable result of strategic and operational decisions, plans and execution – or of any combination of these factors.

Strategic decisions are influenced not only by the logic of an ends-ways-and-means deduction. Among the strategic leaders who influence decisions, responsibilities and agendas operate beyond the immediate issue. Participants lead organizations and represent their institutional cultures. Strategic leaders operate through interpersonal relationships where processes and decisions are influenced by shifting alliances and interests, and in intra-group relations subject to the power and personalities of individuals. Thus, simplistic judgments of strategic decisions and their outcomes are futile.

This paper assumes and appreciates that there is no science or consistent methodology capable of isolating and weighing each and every factor that played into the decision to attack Norway or explain how and why the campaign came about. Envisioning the chaotic fabric of interwoven strategic arguments, operational risks, institutional interests and the psychological influence of individuals, this paper assumes that each of these factors, however subtle, may substantially influence strategic decisions and outcomes.

QUESTIONABLE STRATEGIC MEANS AND GLOOMY OPERATIONAL RISKS

Operation *Weserübung* began as a surprise naval operation with several small groups of ships in sequenced sailing order: small groups unable to support each other in the face of the British Royal Navy. The Germans fully appreciated the superiority of the British Fleet and their own naval shortcomings. Dismayed by the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Commander-in-Chief (C-i-C) of the German Navy, Grossadmiral³ Erich Raeder stated that his "...surface forces...are so inferior in number and strength to those of the British Fleet ...that they can do no more than show they know how to die gallantly."⁴ A plan was in place to build up the rather small Kriegsmarine⁵ to a level where it could take on the British Royal Navy and add naval operations at the high seas to the German strategic tool-box. That plan, however, projected a continuous build-up until at least 1944 before the estimated force-levels could be reached.

Moreover, there was the ever-present challenge of the North Sea and the Arctic waters. While the Gulf Stream keeps harbors open year-round along the entire Norwegian coast, it also produces extremely rough seas and demanding conditions for naval operations.⁶ Additionally, winter pack ice substantially decreases maneuver room in the Arctic seas and World War II sailors, not benefiting from modern electronic systems, found navigation extremely difficult.⁷

The amphibious *Weserübung* employed less than 9000 German ground troops. Six different groups would secure bridgeheads for landings at six different locations spread out along almost the entire long seaboard and in the deep fjords of Norway. None of these six assault units exceeded 2500 troops. Planning included the movement of an additional 54,000 troops and their supplies over the twelve days following the initial attack.⁸ This was a scant force to undertake such an ambitious operation, but the Germans did not expect a tough Norwegian military defense.⁹

Norway, a young state and inexperienced in foreign affairs and strategy, had enjoyed a long peace and had been relatively successful staying neutral in World War I - though having had to strike an uneasy balance between the belligerents.¹⁰ Even though WWI had brought the consequences of war to the Norwegians' doorsteps, Norway let her defense capabilities dwindle in the inter-war years.¹¹ The scaling back of the Norwegian armed forces was dramatic and left Norway with a tiny and poorly trained standing defense force, no strategic warning system, no capability at the operational level and insufficient means of guarding her territorial integrity. There were reserves and a mobilization system, but the reserves were poorly trained, heavy weaponry scarce and the mobilization system had never been tested.¹²

However, in order to get to the ports for the landings the German convoys had to run "...the gauntlets of the Norwegian coastal batteries..."¹³ Moreover, Norway did have a mobilization system and six reserve brigades.¹⁴ Even with the most optimistic German projections, which included an assessment that the brigades needed 12 days to be ready after mobilization, at least an incidental Norwegian defense effort could not be ruled out. An amphibious assault is extremely vulnerable to even light resistance at the initial landings. The long odds attendant to even getting safely across the harsh North Sea in the teeth of the British Navy and the prospect of landing small, lightly armed forces of limited fighting power at a number of different places could quite understandably have discouraged German decision-makers on tactical and operational grounds.

In late 1939, following the successes of the *Anschluss*¹⁵ and the campaign in Poland, Germany's immediate attention was on continental Europe. Every effort was made to avoid a war with Great Britain. In light of Hitler's 'promise' to the C-i-C of the Kriegsmarine, that such a war would not occur before 1944 to enable the German Navy to grow to suitable size and power, it is not surprising that Hitler and Raeder would later label the invasion of Norway "the cheekiest operations in recent history." As they would acknowledge, the operation broke "all the rules of naval warfare"¹⁶.

This begs the question: Having serious strategic challenges in continental Europe and, if operating in the North Sea, certainly risking facing the British Navy, why chance a questionable campaign in Norway in hazardous waters? Was the campaign important enough to offset these risks? Was the operation a consistent part of German strategy resulting from a balanced deliberation that included careful risk-reward assessment, or did other factors weigh in on that decision? In either case, how did that decision-making process operate? How did the process influence the planning and the final decision?

STRATEGIC FACTORS

ACCESS TO THE ATLANTIC – BASES IN NORWAY

The strategic importance of the Atlantic was nothing new to the Germans. Neither were the strategic advantages of Norwegian bases, from which the Kriegsmarine would have the freedom of action to operate in a potential naval strife with Britain. “The German Navy had long had its eyes on the north. Germany had no access to the wide ocean, a geographical fact that had been imprinted on the minds of its naval officers during the First World War.”¹⁷ Those vivid WW-I experiences were not confined to the minds of the German naval officers, but concerned German strategists alike. The Imperial Navy’s¹⁸ considerable potential had been rendered strategically inconsequential¹⁹ because the “German High Seas Fleet never reached the high seas.”²⁰ The British-enforced blockade in the Atlantic (running from Bergen to the Shetlands) effectively restricted the German Navy to the land-locked southern part of the North Sea.²¹ The German merchant fleet was similarly bottled up. The blockade eventually contributed to a famine estimated to have cost 700,000 German lives.²² Moreover, though claiming neutrality, the Norwegians had been forced to run their merchant fleet in allied service – explaining why German U-boats sank half of the Norwegian merchant fleet.²³ The important German strategic lesson learned was that Norwegian neutrality could be challenged and that Norway might yield to pressure.

The German naval officer and naval theorist Wolfgang Wegener had argued as early as 1915 for a naval strategy to facilitate control over the Atlantic. He saw that control of the Skagerak and newly acquired bases were necessary to allow the Navy to engage in and control the Atlantic, and suggested an elaborate scheme of German bases in the Atlantic. More specifically, he criticized the German naval strategy of lacking operational soundness and strategic vision; waiting for a decisive battle in the North Sea while conceding to the British all of the strategic and operational advantages. Wegener’s vision might make possible “the world power position of the German Fleet.”²⁴ His ideas may seem lofty given the known outcome of

WW I, but Wegener made his argument from a supposition that Germany might reach a favorable position in the aftermath of the war and claimed that, until that war ended Germany needed to "be ready to seize any opportunities."²⁵ He went on to point out that: "...nobody can already know today what attitude the Nordic countries will take if the English ravishing at sea further presses them."²⁶

Wegener's theories reached many more when, as a Vice Admiral, he published his book The Naval Strategy of the World War, "One of the few books Hitler ever read on naval strategy..."²⁷ The strategic concepts were basically unchanged from 1915, save that Norway now "featured prominently in Wegener's thinking."²⁸ His work was popular in the naval community and his theories were used by military scholars. War-games conducted in the inter-war years reinforced Wagener's conclusions.²⁹ This discussion also influenced Raeder: "...the C-i-C of the navy was also caught up in the stream of expansionist and offensive ideas, including the acquisition of bases that characterized this period."³⁰ Consequently, Raeder called for more 'Wegenerism' in German naval strategy time and again over several years.³¹

Thus, compelling theories existed for a new naval strategy to support German interests and future war objectives. These theories encompassed economic aspects and accounted both the necessity of the free flow of strategic goods to Germany and the protection of the transports. Argued over time by a respected theorist and naval leader and the C-i-C of the Kriegsmarine, these theories matured through professional debate. The result was a sound concept, potentially able to negate Germany's difficult geographic position with a viable, ambitious naval strategy for a war with Great Britain; and it included German bases at the Norwegian coast. The naval side of the German military house included a movement for expansionist and offensive naval concepts. Certainly, and not unimportantly, these ideas had been known to the Führer and to the German military leadership long before planners were put to work on sketches for a Norwegian campaign in the fall of 1939.

GERMAN MILITARY BUILD-UP, SWEDISH IRON ORE AND NORWEGIAN WATERS

Hitler was convinced of two major prerequisites to a future successful Third Reich. One was self-sufficiency in strategic materials; the other was a prepared military machine. He pushed these issues from the time that he came in power. In 1936 he issued a document that "cast Germany in an apocalyptic struggle against bolshevism and worldwide Jewry - a struggle it dare not lose, considering the result would lead ... to another Versailles."³² Hitler predicted the annihilation of the German people if the country were to fail to meet his expectations, wailed at the slow progress from 1933 to 1936, and demanded an increased effort toward the two

identified strategic prerequisites. Among the strategic materials he singled out was iron ore.

Hitler exhorted that with enough effort, Germany could be self-sufficient.³³

Even after significant growth in German iron ore production, and the addition of almost 3 million more tons of 'domestic' ore by the 1938 Anschluss, by 1939 Germany was still dependent upon imports. To an increasing degree through the late thirties, Germany was specifically dependent upon Swedish iron ore. This had manifold reasons. German demand for iron grew as a direct result of increased industrial production and military build-up. From 1935 to 1938, iron ore imports increased by more than 50%. As the favored Swedish ore had double the iron content of other imported ores, it came to represent almost half of the German imports. Despite a four-year plan to achieve independence from ore imports, German estimates concluded that without Swedish ores carried through Norwegian waters, there would be a critical import shortfall: a shortfall seriously damaging in wartime.³⁴

During the warm parts of the year, Swedish iron ore could be transported down the Baltic. But in winter, Swedish Baltic ports froze, forcing the routing of ore through Narvik. As the ore could be transported safely almost all the way to Germany inside Norwegian territorial waters, the winter route was secure so long as Norwegian neutrality was respected.³⁵

Thus, in the autumn of 1939 Germany was increasingly dependent upon Swedish iron ore to build up the military and to sustain it during war-time. The winter transport of iron ore depended on the security of Norwegian territorial waters. Norwegian territorial waters, their control, and their protection were important strategic issues for Germany.

GERMAN STRATEGIC OPTIONS IN THE FALL OF 1939

Despite Wegener's visions and Raeder's talks, Hitler initially showed little interest in the Atlantic and Norway. Aware of the evolving allied formation and anticipating allied moves to counter German expansion after the incorporation of Austria, three strategic options were given special attention by the German leadership after the successful blitzkrieg in Poland.

At an October 2 naval conference, Raeder presented Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's (OKW)³⁶ options for future campaigns:

1. Attempt a decision by operations on land in the west. Concentrate the entire armament industry and war economy on the Army and the Air Force.
2. Attempt a decision by the 'siege of Britain.' Concentrate efforts on the most speedy and large-scale expansion of the submarine arm and the aircraft required for warfare against Britain. On land: Defense in the west.
3. Defense at sea and on land; delaying tactics.³⁷

As these alternatives indicate, German strategic deliberations were focused on France and Great Britain. The first option, a German land offensive in the west, meant that the Navy

would receive little attention. Arguably, the rationale for a naval operation against Norway would dwindle as it would be difficult to capitalize on an occupation of Norway unless means were available to support an effective follow-on campaign from that country.

However, if the Germans were to choose the Great Britain option (option number two), Norwegian bases would prove very handy. In a defensive strategy an argument could be made for an operational naval offensive aiming at keeping the British from occupying Norway and/or to threaten Norwegian territorial waters.

GERMAN ASSESSMENTS AND THE ROAD TO WESERÜBUNG

KEEPING THE NORWEGIAN OPTION ALIVE

Hitler seemed set on an offensive in continental Europe. Nevertheless, support for a major land offensive lukewarm, with influential leaders hesitant and the Army establishment very pessimistic, a strategic defense or a Siege of Britain still seemed feasible. Both options called for significant naval contributions, but the Kriegsmarine was far from ready. The number of submarines with the capability to operate effectively was too small. The number of subs was projected to climb rapidly, but the lack of capable surface ships and suitable aircraft was far more troubling. And the Navy would not be able to support any strategy for a major war without an expanded operational base. Raeder fully recognized this predicament, but understood that the Navy would be unable to support any likely future strategy, regardless of its state of readiness, if it were to be locked in – like it was during WW I. Moreover, the Navy was likely to be neglected if it could not present viable contributions to potential German military endeavors.

Thus, the day after his presentation of strategic options to the Navy, he asked his staff for estimates on acquisition of bases in Norway through diplomatic pressure or secured with a military campaign. On October 5 Raeder approached the Army Chief of Staff to discuss possible contributions in an effort to expand the operational base for the Navy and the Air Force, to include an operation to seize and defend bases in Norway. The Army Chief was less than thrilled. Even the naval staff was “far from enthusiastic”³⁸ in its assessments of 9 October, presenting serious objections to such an adventure any time soon because of the lack of resources.

The professional estimates did not encourage a grand naval operation and Hitler still hoped to avoid, for a time, hostilities with Britain. His speech to the *Reichstag*³⁹ on October 6 included an offer of peace to Great Britain and France. Nevertheless, he had decided on the strategic priorities. On October 9, 1939 Hitler issued order to his military chiefs to speed up the planning for operation *Gelb*.⁴⁰ He directed a push to the northwestern coasts of France and the

Low Countries that would provide submarine-bases for a campaign against Great Britain.⁴¹ This would, of course, still not alleviate the fundamental operational problem for the German Navy, access to the open sea for future campaigns. This strategic direction gave priority to the Army and the Air Force and left little room for ambitious naval operations and for the build-up of sufficient high seas capabilities. As the Air Force was to support a ground offensive, aircraft with the appropriate capabilities would be so prioritized at the expense of air support for naval operations.⁴²

Again, Raeder was quick on his feet. In a conference with Hitler on October 10, he elucidated the naval limitations of the strategy and “pointed to the advantages of bases on the Norwegian coast.”⁴³ Hitler showed little enthusiasm, but “agreed to take the question of Norway under consideration.”⁴⁴ In late October the Germans had solid evidence that British ships had loaded goods from Sweden and the Baltic nations at Narvik for shipment to Great Britain. This brought the issues of strategic goods and British interests in Norway – the whole issue of Norway for that matter – to the forefront with the German Navy staff. The Kriegsmarine concluded that shipments from the Baltic nations to Britain via Sweden and Norway had increased dramatically. The staff also muttered that the Kriegsmarine had little chance of interdicting these transports because the British took full advantage of neutral Norwegian waters. It also became clear to the Germans that in addition to facilitating future German endeavors on the open seas, a Norwegian campaign would not only secure German imports of crucial strategic goods; it could deprive them to Great Britain.⁴⁵ This was not an insignificant addition to Raeder’s argument for the Norway option, as a toll on crucial British imports would support a siege of Britain and lead to a better strategic position.

These issues were not at the forefront of deliberations among the higher levels of German leadership. Raeder, however, never gave up the Norwegian option. On November 26, he told his staff that “he saw a danger, in the event of a German attack on the Netherlands, that Britain might stage a surprise landing on the Norwegian coast and take possession of a base there.”⁴⁶ Shortly after he repeated this message to Hitler and “stated that it was important to occupy Norway.”⁴⁷ Through December 1939 Raeder tirelessly kept the option of a campaign in Norway alive. Moreover, he increasingly tied his arguments to assessments to British threats and strategic vulnerabilities, which would become quite important.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Raeder either guessed right or had excellent intelligence. Either way, his analyses were spot on. Proposals for an intervention in Norway had been voiced in Britain for some time.

Interdicting the transport of iron ore from Sweden to Germany was enthusiastically advocated by Churchill, who stated in late November that: "Nothing would be more deadly...to the German war-making capacity, and to the life of the country"⁴⁸ than to stop the Swedish ore from reaching Germany.⁴⁹

In Great Britain Churchill's ideas, however strategically sound, were deemed politically infeasible. British values and the relationship with Norway factored, but a far more important argument against Churchill's ideas centered in the relationship to the U.S., which could not be jeopardized. A British violation of Norway would not likely be acceptable to the U.S., and getting the Americans into an alliance was more important than anything else. However, the political preconditions for British operations in Norwegian waters changed with the outbreak of the Soviet-Finnish War on November 30, 1939. A small Nordic Country had been attacked by Russia, and support to the Finns would probably offset the political incorrectness of naval operations and uninvited shipping in Norwegian waters and harbors. German considerations ran along the same lines. Allied support to the Finns was anticipated and "Allied intervention to aid Finland could be expected to entail an occupation of Norwegian ports."⁵⁰

Raeder had made sure to bring Norway to Hitler's attention time and again. However, it may be that the importance of Norway emerged as a practical, urgent strategic concern to Hitler for the first time with the outbreak of the Soviet-Finnish War. Only two weeks later Norway was brought onto Hitler's agenda again. On December 14 and December 18, Hitler met with Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian political party *Nasjonal Samling*.⁵¹ Quisling warned Hitler of Anglo-Norwegian collaboration and claimed that, despite declared Norwegian neutrality, secret conspiracies between the British and the Norwegians were supported in the Norwegian cabinet. Quisling also claimed a great following in Norway and that Norwegians would welcome a German supported take-over of government by the *Nasjonal Samling*. This played on Hitler's racial ideas of the importance of Nordic blood to the development of The Third Reich. These meetings came about with the help of the German ideologist and political theorist Alfred Rosenberg and, of course, with a push from Raeder. Quisling made sure to nurture the seed of mistrust towards the Norwegian Government throughout the winter of 1939-1940. Hitler either warmed the Norwegian issue or tired of being reminded of it. After his first meeting with Quisling he ordered the OKW to "investigate how one can take possession of Norway."⁵²

Grand strategic priorities left no room for a Navy build-up or for naval initiatives in the Atlantic. The Norwegian issue had been driven to the point of a planning process at the OKW – directed by the Führer.⁵³ At this time Hitler probably remained unconvinced of the necessity for an invasion. "It was obviously a largely theoretical exercise, as Hitler was empathic in his

insistence that he felt a neutral Norway was in Germany's best interest.⁵⁴ Raeder ensured that Hitler kept Norway on his mind when he "declared it essential that Norway not fall into British hands"⁵⁵ in late December 1939.

At the turn of the year the Norwegian Project was still indistinct, but the planning process was soon to be thrown into high gear. On January 10 the initial OKW appreciation for a Norwegian Campaign, called *Studie Nord*, was issued to the service staffs for planning. Raeder's staff, which had been looking into the Norwegian option for some time, took little time flesh out an operational concept and the prerequisites for success. These conclusions were later included in all planning stages, reflected all the landing sites eventually used, and emphasized the overriding operational principle of surprise. A North Sea naval operation against Norway could only succeed if the British sea control could be counterbalanced by surprise. The other services unable to influence the planning before Hitler, on January 23, "placed the planning for Norway firmly within the hands of the OKW."⁵⁶ By this time Hitler had obviously developed a closer interest and a personal approach to the Norwegian Campaign, as this order included the note that "work on Studie 'N' would be continued under his [Hitler's] personal and immediate influence."⁵⁷ The order also included the codename *Weserübung* and directed that planning be executed in a group that could form the core of an operations staff.⁵⁸

There were several reasons for Hitler's renewed interest and a number of arguments for placing the operation exclusively in the hands of OKW. As Hitler had been anxious to launch the land-offensive against France and the Low Countries operation for some time, planners had repeatedly pointed to weather among the many preconditions. Then *Gelb* was effectively postponed when information on the operation was compromised in spectacular circumstances.⁵⁹ Before *Gelb* could be reassessed and launched there was ample time for the British to intervene in Norway. The Norwegian contingency offered an opportunity for Britain and France to take the initiative in the "phony war."⁶⁰ Keeping the planning for *Weserübung* at OKW, in a staff manned with officers from all services, would both promote operational security and force the joint planning processes instrumental for success in Norway. Hitler made the operation a personal matter of *Feldherr*⁶¹ Adolf Hitler by placing it with a small staff attached to the OKW but reporting to himself.⁶²

Hitler's interest in *Weserübung* was further boosted by the *Altmark* affair. The German supply ship *Altmark* entered Norwegian waters on February 14, 1940 while returning to Germany from a support mission in the South Atlantic. *Altmark* carried 303 captured British seamen collected from the commerce raiders she supplied. Norwegian authorities may or may not have had knowledge of this, for the Norwegian Navy made only a slapdash inspection of

Altmark and escorted her on toward Germany. The British had long since identified *Altmark*, and launched a rescue operation, breeched Norwegian neutrality, boarded the ship, and killed a number of German sailors. The British sailors were returned to England with considerable propaganda gain. This incident indicated to Hitler that the British had no intention of honoring Norwegian sovereignty and that Norway was not capable of enforcing her neutrality. Perhaps even more importantly, the low-key Norwegian diplomatic complaints after the incident fed allegations of a secret, high-level Anglo-Norwegian conspiracy that had been repeatedly reported by Quisling.⁶³

On February 21, Hitler received General Nicolaus von Falkenhorst, whom the chief of the operations department of the OKW, General Alfred Jodl, had proposed as a suitable commander for *Weserübung*. At this time Hitler had not only decided on the Campaign in Norway but also decided that he would launch *Weserübung* before *Gelb*. He told Falkenhorst, "I cannot and will not begin the offensive in the West before this affair has been settled."⁶⁴ During the following month planning continued under the leadership of Falkenhorst but, apart from the seizing of Denmark as a supporting operation, little was added to the overall concept already prescribed by the Navy staff. Diligent planning eventually sorted out the countless logistical issues and the complex problems of combining naval, air and ground operations. *Weserübung* had evolved, in little more than three months, from a vague idea into a complex, joint operation.⁶⁵

WESERÜBUNG – AFTER ALL

Weserübung succeeded with very close margins. The British mined Norwegian waters on April 8, the day before the main German thrust into Norway, but too late to impede the German ships which had been on their way for some time. There were incidental clashes at sea. Ships were sunk by the Norwegian coastal artillery. But the campaign was largely successful, despite an operational problem in the North, were the Norwegians put up stiff resistance and the Allied counter-offensive whipped the Germans at Narvik. The Allies eventually withdrew because of a greater concern for continental Europe when Hitler launched *Gelb*, and that problem resolved too when the Norwegians capitulated in the north.

It is not intended to go into details of the campaign. The major point is that during the execution of the campaign the Germans came close to failing. Had the timing been a little different on either side, the German convoys may never have reached Norwegian ports. Had the allies not withdrawn from the northern part of the theatre, the Germans may have been forced out leaving the important iron ore port of Narvik in allied hands.⁶⁶

German strategic direction in the fall of 1939 did not support a campaign in Norway and it was in Germany's interest to honor Norwegian neutrality. Navy parochial interests kept the contingency alive while changing strategic assessments, particularly as to the British intentions and a number of other factors and coincidental incidents, as well as shrewd play by Raeder, lead to Hitler's increasing interest in the project. Hence, the emergence of *Weserübung* was not a logical consequence of consolidated strategic planning. It was the product of an inconsistent process fed by isolated and sometimes contradictory interests, assumptions and events.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AND LEADERSHIP

THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE WEHRMACHT

Had there not been an in place organization capable of supporting joint planning and supporting Hitler's ability to drive through ad-hoc strategic decisions despite resistance from professionals and institutions, there would have been no *Weserübung*.

On January 30, 1933 General (Later Field-Marshall) Werner von Blomberg came into office as the *Reich Defense Minister* and C-i-C of the Wehrmacht.⁶⁷ (He was War Minister from March, 1935). Unlike his predecessors, who had carried out their political and administrative duties and left the services at the top of the military organization, Blomberg set out to create and integrate a military high command in his ministry. This unified command was to be superior to the services and coordinate all military planning and operational activities. Moreover he "maintained that he should be responsible for the co-ordinated direction, not only of military operations, but also of the other weapons of 'total war' such as propaganda and economic warfare, and even of civil defense throughout the public services."⁶⁸ Using the terms and positions of current U.S. political-military organization, Blomberg would be the Secretary of Defense, Chief of the Joint Staff – at a level higher than the service chiefs - and the (only) combatant commander. He would also have the authority to direct all other departments and agencies in matters of war.⁶⁹

Subtly but steadily Blomberg developed the organization of his ministry with the aim of making it an effective military General Staff that could support his enhanced responsibilities and authority.

The changes in command relations and the implicit infringement on military professional virtues guarded by the services created tensions as early as 1934. The reorganization caused upheaval that affected personal relationships and divided the army officers into one camp suffused with Nazi zeal and another consisting of army "traditionalists." Parochial interests became evident and the service chiefs fought their loss of power. The Army wanted to remain

the chief bureau for waging war, to include economical matters. The Air Force was a young and ambitious service, led by the powerful flamboyant, vain and rude Reichsmarshall for aviation Herman Göring, who had distaste for staff.⁷⁰ The Navy, under Raeder – arguably the shrewdest service chief - was fighting for a strategic role and institutional prominence. Nevertheless, Blomberg would not be discouraged and continued confidently and defiantly on his quest.

The new War department awarded the C-i-C unprecedeted power. This position also provided him both the opportunity and the power to influence policy, which Blomberg frequently exercised with Hitler.⁷¹ When Blomberg was forced from office, on February 4, 1938, Hitler assumed the position of C-i-C of the Wehrmacht himself. At the same time "...the war ministry was abolished."⁷² Hitler then brought in General Keitel as chief of the new Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) – a man he could easily control and from whom he could expect no dissent. Keitel took over Bloomberg's headquarters intact.

The implications of these moves are staggering. The Head of State and the C-i-C had merged into one person. There were no political or military institutional layers between Hitler and military affairs and operations. Had there been limitations to Blomberg's influence, there were no boundaries to the Führer. Hitler now had a military headquarters and a chief who could deal with the military establishment from an authoritative position with no interest other than to support whatever Hitler wanted. The headquarters of the Führer and the headquarters of the Armed Forces had been welded into one organization.

THE FÜHRER AND THE MILITARY – HITLER'S LEADERSHIP

Hitler seemed to have a love-hate relationship with the military. He took a keen interest in military affairs, was well read and his knowledge spanned technical as well as strategic and operational themes. He could also be very emotional about 'his troops' and wanted to be seen as part of the Wehrmacht. The Führer was quite obviously drawn to the nobility of military service and wanted to be associated with the Wehrmacht, while at the same time he was less patient with the diligence and professional outlook of the Prussian military tradition and the Army as such.⁷³ Later in the war he commented on his dislike of the Army as a whole, blaming Blomberg for the professional or cultural flaws of the organization: "all that goes back to the time when Blomberg's broad shoulders came between me and the Wehrmacht."⁷⁴

In his dealing with the military, Hitler showed a sage grasp of organizational psychology, powers of persuasion and a remarkable ability to win admiration, combined with a total absence of moral boundaries, cunning opportunism and ruthless exploitation. His goal was apparently to

expand his power-base – indefinitely it seems. The Third Reich was to be built on two pillars; the party and the Wehrmacht. By the time of World War II Hitler had complete control over the party and straddled the official positions that made it possible to operate smoothly both domestically and internationally. From 1938 he tightened the grip on the Armed Forces through a series of personnel replacements and organizational changes, and the steady build-up of Adolf Hitler as the mythic, infallible *Feldherr*.

Hitler showed little empathy and a lot of ruthless, manipulative abilities in the ways that he rid himself of strong personalities and professionals as well as troublesome dissidents and individuals not adequately submissive to the Führer. Blomberg, considered “one of the most outstanding soldiers of the Prussian Army,”⁷⁵ had nursed Hitler through the fight between the SA and the Army and the definite relegation of the SA to insignificance.⁷⁶ He later developed the OKW into the very foundation of Hitler’s commanding position of power. Nevertheless, when the opportunity to get rid of Blomberg arose, Hitler took little time to take advantage of it. When von Blomberg was caught up in an unfortunate romantic affair and a marriage that came under heavy fire, he was forced to resign. C-i-C of the Luftwaffe Herman Göring, himself interested in Blomberg’s posting, had a large hand in these intrigues.⁷⁷ Soon thereafter, Hitler got rid of the C-i-C of the Army. Generaloberst⁷⁸ Freiherr Werner von Fritsch: “...a gifted and unbending officer of the old school...”⁷⁹ was the obvious candidate to succeed Bloomberg as Minister of War and C-i-C of the Armed Forces. However, von Fritch had been hostile to the Nazi Party and had from the beginning offered stiff resistance to Hitler’s military plans. He was framed by the Chief of the SS and the police, Heinrich Himmler, and eventually had to stand trial on charges of homosexual conduct. He was relieved well before the trial. The generals complained audibly, and soon there were rumors of a coup. Shortly afterwards, sixteen more generals were relieved and forty-four others transferred – all of whom were considered “less than enthusiastic in their devotion to Nazism,...”⁸⁰ Hitler simultaneously laundered the Foreign Office, washing out the leader Neurath, and got rid of Schacht, the minister of economics.

The Führer also deliberately replaced strong leaders with compliant people who would help him secure increasing power and influence for himself. When he brought in General Keitel as the chief of the OKW, he consulted Bloomberg and mentioned Keitel, whom he had seen in Bloomberg’s office. Bloomberg’s response was: “Oh, Keitel; there’s no question of him; he’s nothing but the man who runs my office.”⁸¹ Hitler responded: “That’s exactly the man I’m looking for.”⁸² General Warlimont, who served on the OKW staff, claimed that “General Keitel had basically neither the ability nor the character to be military Chief of Staff to a man like Hitler and he immediately and unresistingly allowed himself to be degraded to the position of *Chef de*

*Bureau.*⁸³ In his book Hitler's Generals Walter Görlitz characterizes Keitel as "...no 'homo politicus; he did not possess any sound conviction and totally lacked inner sovereignty of character..." and claims that "...Keitel was deeply impressed by the Führer,..."⁸⁴ No question, in Keitel Hitler had found a devoted and professionally unambitious messenger-boy. The chief of the operations staff at the OKW, General Alfred Jodl, had an unfailing admiration for and devotion to Hitler. He struck a special relationship with the Führer that outlived all strains and was very much driven by the prerogatives awarded to him. Jodl was very effective in keeping the Army out of important matters and keeping the powerful C-i-C of the Luftwaffe in check.⁸⁵

Simultaneously with Blomberg's departure, Hitler cleansed the Foreign Office, replacing Neurath with "the shallow and compliant Ribbentrop"⁸⁶ and "The weakling Funk was formally named as the successor Schacht as Minister of Economics."⁸⁷ Personnel replacements, combined with Hitler's self-appointment as the C-i-C and the abolishment of the War Ministry, expanded Hitler's power-base dramatically. On February 5, the day after Hitler's self-appointment, the headlines of the Voelkischer Boebachter⁸⁸ described Hitler's coup in one sentence: "STRONGEST CONCENTRATION OF ALL POWERS IN THE FUEHRERS HANDS".⁸⁹

The centralization of strategic powers and the OKW meant that Hitler could now move rapidly, both strategically and operationally. The deliberate placing of compliant individuals in key positions, while excluding professionals and dissidents, enabled him to play by ear and make far-reaching ad-hoc decisions.⁹⁰ This organizational framework was a prerequisite for the following military campaigns and the successful operations in 1939 and 1940 would consolidate Hitler's power and his control of the military establishment.

On 24 April 1942, Hitler declared

"that there had been only two decisive events thus far in the entire war. While many historians may well guess at least one of these, the German 'defensive battle' outside Moscow during the previous winter, only a few would discern that the other crucial event the Führer had in mind was the 'Norwegian campaign of 1940'"⁹¹

This may lead one to think that Hitler had long planned to occupy Norway. As this paper has concluded, this was of course not so. Underscoring the success of the Norwegian campaign, Hitler was building on his reputation as a magical military mind and his power over the military establishment. The way *Weserübung* was conceived, planned and executed – and the fact that it was a success – further consolidated the organizational framework and promoted Hitler as a *Feldherr*. Later in the war he would continue to change command relations and

assume command authority himself, and to interfere directly with the operational and tactical directions in a detailed manner – way beyond his competency.⁹²

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

THE IMPACT OF WESERÜBUNG

Historians disagree on the direct military impact of Operation *Weserübung* on the war. Mann and Jörgensen claim that the campaign and in particular the losses to the German Navy during the assault, were of “crucial strategic implications for the rest of the war,”⁹³ chiefly due to three factors. First, the operation denied the British possession of Norway and her territorial waters. Second, the constant threat presented by the German Navy could not be ignored by the British and their over-stretched Royal Navy was forced to guard the Bergen-Shetland line. Thirdly, “the campaign had been achieved at limited cost and at no detriment to *Plan Gelb* – the attack on France.”⁹⁴ In the Official British History, T.K. Derry says that “...in particular, the North Norway fjords provided the bases for deadly attacks by aircraft, submarines, and surface ships against our [British] Murmansk convoys in 1942”⁹⁵ and indicates that the Germans had significant impact on the British Royal Navy’s operations in the Atlantic.⁹⁶

Claasen and Ziemke, on the other hand, state that the campaign had little impact on the larger war. According to Claasen, German hopes to utilize Norwegian bases in the Battle of Britain and the Atlantic Campaign were never realized owing to the absence of a coherent maritime-air strategy Germany’s early failure to develop long-range reconnaissance and anti-shipping aircraft.⁹⁷

On the whole it seems a fair conclusion that *Weserübung* impacted the naval operations in the North Sea and in particular limited the British Navy’s freedom of movement. German strategic gains from operations in Norway, in themselves, probably influenced no direct change in the course of the war. Germany simply had insufficient appropriate, open-ocean naval and air resources to develop the full potential of the Norwegian bases.

INDIRECT AND LONG TERM EFFECTS

Operation *Weserübung*, absent an appropriate fleet, never enabled the Germans’ quest for a new strategic role for the Kriegsmarine. However, there were other indirect and second- and third order effects. The invasion of Norway clearly signaled that Germany would not allow flaky commitments to neutrality where their interests were threatened. *Weserübung* demonstrated Germany’s ability to project strategic power, showed that no country could count on being rescued by the Allies, and earned prestige for Germany’s military capabilities. One

may argue that "...the campaign in the Low Countries and France provided similar arguments on a far larger scale..."⁹⁸ In the political strategic realm, *Weserübung*, together with Poland and the subsequent blitzkrieg in the west, contributed to an aggressive strand of overwhelming campaigns that bolstered Germany's military prestige and strategic might. In this, Germany's first fight with the Western Allies, the impact of a failed *Weserübung* would likely have affected Germany more negatively politically and psychologically than not having launched the campaign at all. What would have been the effect on the preparations for and launching of *Gelb*, had *Weserübung* failed?

The loss of many surface ships and transport aircraft not only rendered the Germans unable to take advantage of the strategic outflanking position Norway provided them, but also reduced German capabilities in other theatres.⁹⁹ *Festung Norwegen* tied between 300,000 and 400,000 German troops throughout the war¹⁰⁰ - a force likely to have made a difference if employed elsewhere.

Professionally, the invasion of Norway was a showcase for joint operations. The landing sites and initial operational objectives were secured by air-power alone, and *Weserübung* was a 'first' for several more inventive employments of tactical means. The experiences from the Norwegian campaign added new concepts to the German operational and strategic 'tool-boxes'.¹⁰¹

Hitler's statement that Norway "...would have to become an electrical center of northern Europe,..."¹⁰² is in no way indicative of the German economic gains from the campaigns. The substantial Norwegian merchant fleet slipped out of the Germans' hands as the Norwegian exile Government requisitioned its services in May 1940.¹⁰³ The importance of the Swedish iron ore, once at the heart of the strategic argument for denying the Brits control over Norwegian harbors and waters, dwindled as Germany seized the Lorraine mines in the *Gelb* campaign. Imports of ore from Sweden never came close to the requirements estimated prior to the war.¹⁰⁴

The campaign most likely affected the German leadership both psychologically and organizationally. *Weserübung* built on the success of the Polish campaign and consolidated Hitler's enhanced leadership position after the 'coup' in 1938.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the high command of the Wehrmacht proved successful time and again, which silenced professional objections from the services and also any dissident that still had a voice. The decision-making process provided a blue-print for later decisions made in the secluded environment that Hitler's and the OKW made up. This furnished an efficient set-up for swift strategic decisions, but at the same one that lacked the full breadth of the professional input of the German military.

Perhaps even more significantly, Hitler's direct involvement in the campaign in Poland, *Weserübung* and *Gelb*, and the successes of those operations, proved professional Prussian staff estimates wrong and established Hitler as the *Feldherr* that he wanted to be. Hitler's added self-confidence and his growing image as a genius made it increasingly difficult for the rest of the leadership to reason with him. Throughout the war he would continue to change command relations and assume command authority himself, as well as interfering directly with the operational and tactical directions in a detailed manner – way beyond his competency. This would lead to disastrous decisions later on in the war.¹⁰⁶

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There were probably sound strategic arguments for a German campaign in Norway, although the decision to launch it could not be directly derived from the grand strategic priorities of the day. However, a number of interests, personalities and coincidental factors affected the dynamic process that made up the preconditions for the decision to launch the campaign. Had not Raeder had a long-lasting investment in the project, the operation would probably never have taken place – and in any case there would not have been a solid navy planning-process to draw from. Had not Blomberg patiently and persistently built the OKW, it is highly unlikely that Hitler could have pushed this or later decisions through in the way that he did. Had not von Blomberg married the wrong woman... The list goes on and on, and indicates only that the underlying preconditions for the decision-process may have had as much impact on the decision as the decision-making process itself.

Arguably the most intriguing aspect of this paper is the interrelation between Hitler's strategic leadership before the war, his decision to undertake *Weserübung*, and how the success of that campaign both helped Hitler consolidate his dictatorship and his increasingly autocratic leadership of the Wehrmacht. This would allow him to drive the war way beyond the point of any hope for German victory, leading ultimately to a decisive allied victory.

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ENDNOTES

¹ See Adam R.A. Claasen, *Hitler's Northern War - The Luftwaffe's Ill-Fated Campaign, 1940-1945* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 7-10. It is well documented that the continuous flow of Swedish iron ore to Germany via Norwegian waters was a strategic interest that played into German military strategic deliberations on Norway and Scandinavia. Adam R.A. Claasen concludes that Hitler was certainly interested in the Swedish iron ore, but he also underscores the allied deliberations as to interdict the transportation of iron ore to Germany.

² William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich; A History of Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 673. General Walter Warlimont, who was on the German Supreme Command, offers an inside story of the German decision-makers' assessments and discussions on the matter. See therefore also Walter Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters 1939-45*, trans. R.H. Barry (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1991), 66-81.

³ *Grossadmiral* (Grand Admiral) was the naval version of the highest military rank in the German Armed Forces at the time and was equal to *Admiral of the Fleet* or a five-star Admiral in British or American terms.

⁴ *The Fuehrer conferences on Naval Affairs, 1939-1945*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 37-38; quoted in Chris Mann & Christer Jörgensen, *Hitler's Arctic War – The German Campaigns in Norway, Finland and the USSR 1940-1045*. (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books/St Martin's Press, 2003), 35.

⁵ The *Kriegsmarine* was the German term for the German Navy.

⁶ See Chris Mann & Christer Jörgensen, *Hitler's Arctic War – The German Campaigns in Norway, Finland and the USSR 1940-1045* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books/St Martin's Press, 2003), 9: "The residue of the warm air carried North on the Gulf Stream collides with cold winds blowing southwards from the North Pole. Mixed with the earth's rotation, this produces large depressions, which in turn produce ferocious gales. The huge waves produced when they break on ships turn to ice in the freezing air. The ships pitch and roll and take on 'green water', which often freezes in contact with cold steel. It builds up into heavy encrustations of thick ice. The accumulations adds to the ship's top weight, which causes the ship to consume more oil or coal in her bunkers, thus reducing bottom weight. So stability is reduced and the risk of capsizing is increased. More mundanely, yet no less importantly for the comfort of the crews, conditions aboard, particularly on small ships such as destroyers, the most important combat vessels in the seas in World War II, were miserable given the cold, damp and perpetual motion caused by the high seas"

⁷ Ibid., 9. Proximity to the North Pole caused a significant misdirection on magnetic compasses. Navigation instruments were affected by the cold, the ice and the damp conditions – and their use was made difficult by mist and generally difficult weather conditions.

⁸ Different sources offer similar numbers and facts about the campaign, as most of them directly or indirectly rely on original, German military reports. See for example Claasen, 42-44.

⁹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰ The Scandinavians had enjoyed peace since the Napoleonic Wars - apart from the very short war between Denmark and Germany in 1866. At the outbreak of WW I, Norway had just emerged from a five hundred year junior partner relationship in unions with the other Scandinavian countries; first with Denmark until the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, then with Sweden until 1905.

¹¹ Ibid., 2. Norway was in no way oblivious to the multi-dimensional devastation of the WW I attrition. Beyond the terrible national and personal experiences and the human suffering inflicted upon the participants of the war, WWI had also taken a serious toll on the Norwegian merchant fleet, which was reduced by about 50% by attacks from German U-boats. In the inter-war years however, Norway put all her faith in the League of Nations and a new, international order where peace and independence would be secured by the rule of law. Norway therefore had neither the need nor the intention of backing up her sovereignty with a serious military capability.

¹² Ibid., 45; The Army was reduced from some 3750 officers and regulars to only 470. The compulsory national service, which provided both the basic training for Norwegian soldiers and the foundation for the mobilization system, demanded only 84 days of training, which was insufficient to train capable soldiers, much less capable units and formations. Field exercises in formations had been cancelled due to the lack of funds. The Royal Norwegian Navy had only 63 war-ships against the needs of a 2600-kilometer coastline. Most of these ships were obsolete and of no operational value in a fight with ships at the cutting edge of technology of the time. See also Mann & Jørgensen, 11. There was no Air Force to be reckoned with at all. Astonishingly, Norway actually bought aircraft from Italy in 1932 "...not due to their quality but because they could be paid for with dried fish."

¹³ David Irving, *Hitler's War*. (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1977), 96-97.

¹⁴ See Claasen, 45.

¹⁵ The *Anschluss* (incorporation) is a term used for the German incorporation of Austria as a part of the Third Reich.

¹⁶ Irving, 271.

¹⁷ Shirer, 673.

¹⁸ The *Imperial Navy* is a term for the German Navy of WW I.

¹⁹ See Claasen, 4. The German Navy won a tactical victory in the battle of Jutland, where a number of British ships were sunk, but that led to no strategic advantage.

²⁰ Shirer, 673.

²¹ In some atlases the Atlantic outside the Norwegian Coast is called the *Norwegian Sea*, while the ocean in between continental Europe, Norway and Great Britain is called the *North Sea*. Other maps also name the Atlantic outside the Norwegian coast the North Sea. In this paper the *Norwegian Sea* and the northern part of the *North Sea* are used interchangeably. (The Norwegians usually refer to the ocean outside the Norwegian coast as the *North Sea*).

²² Claasen, 4-5.

²³ See note 11.

²⁴ *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung, 1. Abteilung* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources in cooperation with the U.S. Naval Historical Center, 1984), 2 october 1939; quoted in Claasen, 4. The quote originates from Wolfgang Wegener's personal notes of 1915.

²⁵ Ibid. This quote also originates from Wolfgang Wegener's personal notes of 1915.

²⁶ Ibid. This quote also originates from Wolfgang Wegener's personal notes of 1915.

²⁷ Mann & Jörgensen, 34.

²⁸ Claasen, 4-5.

²⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

³⁰ Ibid., 5-6.

³¹ Ibid., 6.

³² Ibid., 7.

³³ Shirer, 7-10.

³⁴ Claasen, 8-10.

³⁵ See Earl F. Ziemke, "The German Decision to Invade Norway and Denmark," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Robert Greenfield (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1960), 50.

³⁶ The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht was the German term for the Supreme Command of the German Armed Forces. From this on called the OKW.

³⁷ Earl F. Ziemke, *The German Northern Theatre of Operations 1940-1945, part one: The Campaigns in Norway and Denmark*. Undated and unpublished reprint by the United States Naval War College/Joint Military Operations Department from Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-271. (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1959), 4.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

³⁹ The Reichstag was the German Parliament.

⁴⁰ Operation Gelb (Yellow) was the plan for a land offensive westwards on the European continent.

⁴¹ See Irving, 34.

⁴² Less quotations annotated, the past three paragraphs have been based on information from Mann & Jörgensen, 33-34 as well as Irving, 96-97, and Ziemke, *The German Northern Theatre of Operations 1940-1945, part one*, 2-7.

⁴³ Ziemke, "The German Decision to Invade Norway and Denmark," 53.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See Claasen, 13-14.

⁴⁶ Ziemke, op.cit., 54.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ C.J.M. Goulter, *A forgotten Offensive: Royal Air Force Coastal Command's Anti-Shipping Campaign, 1940-1945*. (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 116; quoted in Claasen, 15.

⁴⁹ Ziemke, op.cit., 2-14.

⁵⁰ Claasen, 56.

⁵¹ Nasjonal Samling (National Gathering) was the Norwegian Nationalist-Socialist Party, and a bleach replica of its more famous German champion standard-bearer for fascist movements in Europe.

⁵² Ziemke, op.cit., 49-72. Claasen claims that the order was of December 13, 1939. See Claasen, 15.

⁵³ See Ziemke, op.cit., 55.

⁵⁴ Mann & Jörgensen, 35.

⁵⁵ Ziemke, op.cit., 55.

⁵⁶ Claasen, 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Despite standing orders, a German Luftwaffe major had carried with him secret papers on Operation Gelb on his way to Cologne. Due to bad weather the aircraft strayed over Belgian territory and was eventually forced to make an emergency landing in Belgium. Major Hellmuth Reinberger never managed to destroy the papers completely before he was captured.

⁶⁰ The winter of 1939-1940 was called the "phony war" because although Great Britain and France had declared war on Germany, there was continued diplomacy and political rhetoric rather than fighting and battles.

⁶¹ *Feldherr* is a German term used for a field commander of stature.

⁶² Ibid., 27-29.

⁶³ The last two paragraphs were supported by information from Mann & Jörgensen, 36 and Claasen, 84-85. The Germans knew that Sven Hagelin, a member of the Norwegian government, was Quisling's man. This may have given reports on Norwegian government matters more prominence with the Germans.

⁶⁴ Adolf Hitler; quoted in Claasen, 28.

⁶⁵ Claasen, 36-61.

⁶⁶ Hitler, who followed the campaign closely, became very emotional and wanted to pull General Dietel's forces out of the Narvik area when they were in a bad situation, but was calmed down by Jodl.

⁶⁷ Walter Görlitz, "Blomberg," in Hitler's Generals – Authoritative Portraits of the Men Who Waged Hitler's War, ed. Correlli Barnett. (New York, NY: Quill/William Morrow, 1989), 129-137.

⁶⁸ Warlimont, 6.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 6-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6-29 and Shirer, 309-321. Herman Göring was the highest ranking military in Germany, but at the same time subordinate to the OKW, but as Minister for Aviation he was Keitel's equal. Additionally, he was no. 2 after Hitler in the Nazi party, and enjoyed a close relationship with the Führer. The ambitious Göring no doubt wanted the appointment as the War Minister after Blomberg, which was likely the reason why he became involved in the 'von Blomberg Affair'.

⁷¹ See Warlimont, 9-10.

⁷² Walther Görlitz, "Keitel, Jodl and Warlimont," in Hitler's Generals – Authoritative Portraits of the Men Who Waged Hitler's War, ed. Correlli Barnett. (New York, NY: Quill/William Morrow, 1989), 148.

⁷³ See for example Irving, 10; 44-80.

⁷⁴ Warlimont, 10.

⁷⁵ Görlitz, "Blomberg," 129.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 132-134. The SA (Sturmabteilung – Assault unit) was the paramilitary Nazi Party Army, which in 1933 consisted of 400,000 men.

⁷⁷ See Shirer, 311-314. A widower for some time, von Blomberg caught romantic interest in his secretary, whom he later married. Hence, the aristocratic von Blomberg married below his standing. The marriage was blessed by Hitler, who was one of the principal witnesses during the wedding. Later it became evident that the new Mrs. Von Blomberg had a record with the police and had apparently been a prostitute. The officer corps demanded his resignation and Hitler felt that he had been made look like a fool, having been a witness for von Blomberg.

⁷⁸ Generaloberst (Colonel General) was the second highest Army rank, below Field Marshall.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 314.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 319.

⁸¹ Werner von Blomberg; quoted in Warlimont, 13.

⁸² Adolf Hitler; quoted in Warlimont, 13.

⁸³ See Warlimont, 13.

⁸⁴ Görlitz, "Keitel, Jodl and Warlimont," 144.

⁸⁵ See Warlimont, 6-65.

⁸⁶ Shirer, 319.

⁸⁷ The past 3 paragraphs, less quotations annotated specifically, were based on Shirer, 309-321.

⁸⁸ The *Voelkischer Boebachter* (The Peoples' Observer or The Common Observer) was the leading daily Nazi newspaper.

⁸⁹ *Voelkischer Boebachter*, February 5, 1938; quoted in Shirer, 320.

⁹⁰ See Warlimont, 22-40.

⁹¹ H. Picker, ed., *Hitlers Tischgesräche im Führerhauptquartier*. (Berlin, Germany: Ullstein, 1993); quoted in Claasen, 1.

⁹² See Warlimont, 218; 263; 515; 521-564

⁹³ See Mann & Jørgensen, 61; 117-118; 210.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 188.

⁹⁵ T.K Derry, "The Campaign in Norway," in *History of the Second World War*, ed. J.R.M Butler (London, UK: United Kingdom Military Series, 1952), 229; available from <<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/UK/UK-NWE-Norway/>>; Internet; Accessed 1 April-30 April 2005.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 229-246.

⁹⁷ See Claasen, 250-268.

⁹⁸ T.K Derry, 230.

⁹⁹ See Mann & Jørgensen, 34; 188.

¹⁰⁰ The number varies with different sources, and the number likely varied throughout the war. See for example Mann & Jørgensen, 200.

¹⁰¹ See Claasen, 250-268.

¹⁰² Adolf Hitler; quoted in Claasen, 141.

¹⁰³ See T.K Derry, 229.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. See also Claasen, 8-10. Germany imported nine million tons from Sweden in 1938 and estimates had showed that the need for imports would rise with the increasing needs of the German industry. Swedish records show that only 600,000 tons left Narvik for Germany in 1941, “rising to a rate of 1,800,000 tons per annum in the early months of 1943, after which exports fell off again until the end of the war.”

¹⁰⁵ See pages 13-15 in this paper.

¹⁰⁶ See Warlimont, Irving and Shirer, who all portray Hitler. My characterizations are based on the reading of those three books.

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